

HB 5959 and HB 5804
December 3, 2014

**Statement of Shelley Padnos, Executive Vice President, PADNOS, to Hon. Frank Foster, Chair,
Commerce Committee**

As the Executive Vice President of PADNOS, a multi-million dollar company that employs nearly 400 people in Michigan and is dedicated to providing its customers with scrap management and recycling solutions, I offer this statement in support amending the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) to include "sexual orientation and gender identity." Padnos is a founding member of the Michigan Competitive Workforce Coalition, formed in support of updating the legal protections afforded in this state to the gay and transgender community. We urge the legislature and Governor to act now and amend ELCRA.

Diversity is important to our company and to every company in the sense that you want to be able to have the best people that you can possibly get. But because Michigan's laws currently allow discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, many talented, qualified potential employees are discouraged from calling Michigan home.

Current laws in Michigan create a barrier to people considering either staying or moving to Michigan. The message that lawmakers need to send is that everybody is welcome in Michigan with open arms, and I think the way that they do that is that is by amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

According to a report issued by the Michigan Civil Rights Department in 2013, Michigan's lack of non-discrimination protections for LGBT people is turning away top talent, particularly new college graduates.

At the end of the day, we will need to change minds and hearts to create a truly welcoming place but until then the legislature can send the message that Michigan really is open for business.

My commitment to this issue recently led me, with my partner Carol Sarosik, to launched Our LGBT fund with the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. With an initial focus on homeless LGBT youth, the foundation seeks to create equal opportunity for the LGBT community. We want children to know that they have a place in this world and are worthy, loved and truly respected. By updating the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, we can level the playing field for all Michiganders, and show the country that our state is an open, welcoming and accepting state.